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ABSTRACT

This document discusses latchkey children. It states the problem to be the academic, social, and emotional effects experienced by "latchkey children." Eleven papers or articles on these academic, social, and emotional effects are annotated. Fifteen papers or articles on types of programs available for latchkey children are also annotated. Nine terms such as "isolation" and "self-care" are defined. The following points are summarized: (1) the emotional impact of the latchkey situation depends on the situation, but fear that someone would break into the house was the most common fear and hiding the most common method of coping; (2) socialization was limited because of lack of contact with parents and friends; (3) cognitive deficits existed among latchkey girls and greater concern about homework; and (4) increasing numbers of alternative programs are becoming available. The document recommends that: employers should become more involved in providing child care assistance; children should be better skilled in maintaining themselves; awareness programs for parents, teachers, and children should be developed; and child care programs should be expanded. (ABL)

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LATCHKEY CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, latchkey children have attracted considerable public and professional attention. Despite the growing concern about this problem, the number of latchkey children is increasing every day. Although many significant aspects of the problem have been researched, further studies need to be done on this topic.

Studies of emotional and social development in latchkey children have revealed high levels of fear (Long and Long, Latchkey:1981). Isolation, loneliness, and boredom were also reported by many latchkey children.

Academically, latchkey children were affected by anxiety over school work because no one was home to help them (Long and Long, Instructor:1982). Some deficits in cognitive functioning were mentioned in research done by Woods (Woods: 1972).

Several child care programs have been introduced in the United States as alternative programs for latchkey children. Businesses and companies have offered employees programs with flexible child care arrangements that are convenient for the employees (Long and Long, Handbook:1984). Public schools have also started to address the problem of latchkey children by incorporating school-based child care (Morlock: 1984).

Greater response by the community was expected from parents of latchkey children. Involvement in latchkey programs at all levels of government was stressed.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With so many parents in the work force today, the issue of "latchkey" children and the effect it has had on children academically, socially, and emotionally has become a growing concern.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine research on the issue of latchkey children. This study reviewed literature, studies, and research concerning effects latchkey children experienced. This study was done to see what types of programs are available to working parents and their latchkey children.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study was organized into two main sections. The first area dealt with how children are affected emotionally, socially, and academically. The second area dealt with types of programs that are available for latchkey children. Within each section, the annotations were arranged alphabetically by the researcher's last name.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several studies have been done on this topic. Researchers agreed that further studies need to be done in this field.

Many of the early studies had serious methodological flaws (for example, failure to control for social class) that called into question the validity of the conclusions (Crouter, 1983:11). Seligson called for more sophisticated research to determine the full impact of self-care on children (Seligson, 1983:28). Results of studies were insufficient to point to clear-cut positive or negative consequences for the latchkey child (Galambos and Garbarino, 1982:4).

Galambos and Garbarino suggested that further research should include the various aspects of community environment (Galambos and Garbarino, 1982:8).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

"block mother"	program where children have arranged to check in with a neighbor when they get home from school (Robinson, 13)
"checking in"	program designed to provide flexible care and supervision for older elementary and junior high school children, who are assigned to a trained, neighborhood-based family day care provider (McKnight and Shelsby, 24)
independent	relying only on oneself or one's own abilities, judgment, etc.; self-reliant (Webster, 714)
isolation	an isolating or being isolated (Webster, 748)
latchkey child	a metaphorical term used, especially during World War II, to describe children who were given the door keys of their homes and who fended for themselves while the parents worked (Good, 95)
SACC	School-Age Child Care (Carter, 5)
self-care	(1) children left alone to take care of themselves before and after school (Carter, 5); (2) without adult supervision (Stewart, 5)
sibling care	care for a child by older brothers or sisters (Long and Long, Handbook, 35)
state-implemented	(1) to carry into effect; fulfill; accomplish; (2) to provide the means for the carrying out of at the state level (Webster, 705)

ANNOTATIONS

SECTION I

Crouter, Ann C. "The Children of Working Parents." PTA Today 8 (1983): 11-12.

This article discussed how parents' work experiences affect children. The author stressed that it depends on several factors such as who the parents are, who the children are, and the quality of supervision the children are receiving. Studies done between 1930 and 1960 emphasized the negative effects of a working mother on her children. Researchers found that many of the early studies had serious flaws in the methods they used. Those flaws affected their validity. Evidence showed that having a working mother can be beneficial for girls. The girls admire their mothers and become more independent than their peers whose mothers are at home. The need for high-quality child care to be made available for two-career families and single parents was stressed. Some problems could be alleviated by more sensitivity from the work organization. Programs such as flexible scheduling, job sharing, sick leave, and work-site child care were suggested. The hot lines that some communities have started to help handle the fears and problems of latchkey children were also mentioned by the author.

Frenza, Mary. Selected Issues in Elementary Guidance. ERIC, ED 260368, 1984.

In this fact sheet, Frenza reviewed four problem areas that stem from difficulties outside the school which affect the child's academic progress. The four areas are: School phobia, transient children, latchkey children, and the single-parent family. The author listed intervention plans and steps to be used by school counselors when working with children who are affected by these areas. Recommendations for counselors working with latchkey children were to provide counseling to let children deal with their emotions. This could be done individually or in a group. Basic child care and survival skills training were recommended for implementation into the curriculum.

Galambos, Nancy L., and James Garbarino. Identifying the Missing Links in the Study of Latchkey Children. ERIC, ED 222273, 1982.

In this study, questionnaires were sent to 461 rural school district parents concerning child care arrangements. The study was then conducted on fifth and seventh graders. Thirty-three percent of the questionnaires were returned, and the children were chosen depending on their child-care arrangements. The study placed the children into three groups: 1) Children who were regularly unsupervised before or after school, and who had mothers employed outside the home; 2) childen with employed mothers who reported continual adult supervision; and 3) children who were supervised by non-employed mothers. School teachers completed a variety of tests on these students to measure the children's school adjustments both academically and socially. Results of this study suggested that in a rural area that is relatively environmentally safe, latchkey children measured the same as children who are regularly supervised by an adult. The author suggested that further research should include the various aspects of community environment to determine the experiences of the latchkey child.

Long, Thomas J., and Lynette Long. Latchkey Children: The Child's View of Self Care. ERIC, ED 211229, 1981.

This article presented a study conducted in an all-black parochial school. The subjects who were interviewed were 53 children in grades one through six who were latchkey children, and 32 children who were continuously supervised. Presented first were the differences between latchkey children left alone and latchkey children left with siblings. Differences between supervised and unsupervised children were also discussed. Included in the article were the importance of keys, parental instructions, chores, outside play, holidays, friends, illness and fears. Thirty percent of children left alone reported high levels of fear, but they were better informed of procedures for dealing with fears and problems than those children in supervised care. Latchkey children became isolated especially during vacation and holiday periods. Negative effects of the latchkey experience can be moderated by a close parental relationship. Long presented eight conclusions about the experiences of latchkey children.

Long, Thomas, and Lynette Long. "What are the Special Problems of Latchkey Children?" Instructor, May 1982, 39-41.

This article focused on the problems that latchkey children encounter while home alone. Results of a survey done by Long and Long on latchkey children were presented. Fearfulness was said to be a characteristic of latchkey children. The survey showed that the most common fear was that someone would break into the house while they were alone. Many reported hiding, or turning on the television or radio to drown out noise. Early darkness in the winter increased nervousness in younger children. Restrictions on having friends over added to the loneliness of the latchkey child. Another concern for latchkey children was trouble with homework because no one was there to help them. Anxiety about arriving home late from school because of punishment or after-school activities was reported greater for latchkey children than for their peers. Vulnerability to danger was also expressed as a problem of latchkey children. The authors gave two options to working parents -- either teach children how to become more responsible for themselves or provide adult supervision.

Reynolds, Ruth C. What Research Has to Say About Latchkey Programs. ERIC, ED 267922, 1985.

This article examined the issues facing latchkey children in the United States. It stressed the importance for parents, schools and communities to get involved and support special programs for these children. The author stressed that each community must develop a program that will meet the needs of the children in that local environment. Future research on latchkey children should look at the environment in which they live and the things that affect their personal and social development. According to research, latchkey children that are in self-care face many risks. Among the risks are negative feelings, insecurity, accidents, abuse, neglect and fear. The article also focused on the importance of parent and community responsibility to find a solution to the problem of the nation's latchkey children. The best recommendation was to support school-sponsored after-school care programs and community-sponsored family day care programs.

Rodman, Hyman, David J. Pratto, and Rosemary Smith Nelson. "Child Care Arrangements and Children's Functioning: A Comparison of Self-Care and Adult-Care Children." Developmental Psychology, May 1985, 413-18.

This study was done on 96 children. One half were in self-care, and the other half were in adult-care. The study was done to find out whether the self-care arrangement had negative consequences for children. The author investigated the impacts on several dimensions of the children's social and psychological functioning. The author introduced the term self-care because of the negative connotations associated with the term latchkey. The article then explained how the subjects were chosen as well as the procedures and instruments used for the study. The results of the study showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the matched samples. Several limitations of their study were addressed.

Rooney, Teresa. Who is Watching Our Children? The Latchkey Child Phenomenon. ERIC, ED 243598, November, 1983.

This report dealt with the origin of the latchkey phenomenon, the scope of the problem, and characteristics and consequences of the latchkey lifestyle. How the physical and psychological well-being of the children in the latchkey situation are affected was reviewed. The report was divided into four chapters. Chapter One dealt with the availability of child care. In the second chapter, problems that arise when children are left alone were discussed. The effects were categorized into three groups: Physical risks, emotional effects and negative impact on the community (i.e., delinquency). Physical risks such as accidents, fire, abuse, and poisoning were mentioned. The author mentioned that the emotional impact depends upon the age, maturity level, and environment of each child. Juvenile justice officials provided information that linked delinquency with latchkey children. Chapter Three discussed the scope of the latchkey problem, and California's role in school-age child care was described in Chapter Four.

Steinberg, Laurence. "Latchkey Children and Susceptibility to Peer Pressure: An Ecological Analysis." Developmental Psychology 22 (1986): 433-39.

This article contained data on adolescents' after-school experiences and their susceptibility to peer pressure. The sample consisted of 865 students enrolled in grades five through nine in the Madison (Wisconsin) Unified School District. Information was gathered from the students by a questionnaire. Several measures designed to provide information on a variety of concerns such as self-management, family and peer relations, and after-school activities were included. Results of the questionnaire were tabulated and charted in the article. The data were analyzed separately for male adolescents and female adolescents. The study showed that adolescents who do not have as much adult supervision were found to be more susceptible to engage in anti-social activities because of peer pressure. Children who are home alone have less pressure to do things they shouldn't as compared with children who go to a friend's house after school. The study showed that authoritative parenting can provide children with a good foundation to resist peer pressure, even in the afternoon when susceptibility to peer pressure is generally high.

Stewart, Martha. Children in Self-Care: An Exploratory Study. ERIC, ED 224604, May, 1981.

Before- and after-school care arrangements were investigated in this study. Third and fifth grade students attending Newington Elementary School in Summerville, South Carolina, during the 1981-82 school year were the subjects for this study. Special focus was on the extent of self-care arrangement, and the satisfaction of those parents and children using self-care. A questionnaire was sent home to parents to find out some background family information. Twenty students in self-care were interviewed about their feelings regarding rules, emergency instructions, and satisfaction with their care arrangements. The article contained many charts and graphs displaying the results of the surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. Results on levels of satisfaction, percentage of children in various types of self-care arrangements, and percentage of positive and negative perceptions were reported.

Woods, Merilyn B. "The Unsupervised Child of the Working Mother." Developmental Psychology 6 (1972): 14-25.

The subjects of this study were 108 fifth grade children who attended school in the black ghetto of North Philadelphia. The subjects were children of employed mothers. Preliminary data sheets were distributed to the students to determine in which category they would be classified. Four different psychological tests were administered, and teachers, schools, and community records were used to gather other information. Thirty-eight of the mothers were interviewed, and the outcomes of the interviews were reported in detail. Results of the information obtained from the children showed some significant differences. Unsupervised girls exhibited deficits in cognitive functioning as compared to supervised girls. More girls than boys were without supervision. Teachers at the school were unable to tell which children had supervision after school and which ones did not. Results showed that the unsupervised children were not more delinquent, nor did they have more school absences. Maternal quality, the relationship the mother and child had, and the attitudes toward employment by the mother all had impact on the children involved.

ANNOTATIONS

SECTION II

Adams, Diane, and Rhea Strupp. School-Age Child Care Parent Survey, Final Report, ERIC, ED 251180, 1984.

In this study a school district in Madison, Wisconsin, surveyed parents to find out information about their employment and child care arrangements. Attitudes about the kinds of support that should be made available for school-age children were also included in the survey. The appropriate age at which a child could safely be left alone at home was examined. Factors such as how mature the child was, and the child's ability to handle emergencies were considered by parents when leaving children alone. A total of 7,437 questionnaires were distributed to parents; 2,914 were returned. All the completed surveys were tabulated for the school system. At the end of the survey, parents were asked to make comments on the needs of the community for child care services. Forty-four percent of the parents added comments. Survey results showed that the type of child-care arrangements used by parents varied from self care to formal care. The use of self care increased with age, from 5% in kindergarten to 34% in fifth grade. Some parents thought child care was the parents' responsibility instead of the community's; however, many more indicated support for more community services and public support.

Carter, Denise. "The Crisis in School-Age Child Care: What You Should Know. . .What You Can Do," PTA Today 10 (1985): 4-8.

Two major reasons for the increasing number of latchkey children in recent years were cited in this article. Both reasons involved social changes in the family: An increase in the number of working mothers and an increase in the number of single parents. In 1981 more than 60% of mothers of school-age children were employed outside the home, and 20% of children lived in a single-parent family. It was stated that parents and children both have fears and misgivings about being involved in the latchkey situation. Reasons why parents leave their children in self-care were suggested. Four solutions or alternatives for latchkey children and their parents were given. These included School-Age Child Care (SACC) programs, employer-supported child care, alternative latchkey children programs (i.e., phone hot lines, check-in programs, block parents), and survival skills programs. Several books were mentioned as resources to guide latchkey children. Also included were ideas for how PTAs and the schools could become involved in programs designed to help latchkey children.

Coolsen, Peter, and others. When School's Out and Nobody's Home. ERIC, ED 268731, 1985.

This booklet was based on information from a 1984 conference on school-age latchkey children. The purposes of this article were to discuss what is known about children in self-care, to explore alternatives available to parents, and to positively stimulate communities across the U.S. to get involved. The focus of the discussion was on school-age children age six to fifteen. The impact that having parents in the workforce has on children was discussed in the first two chapters. The number of children in self-care, types of benefits, and the risks for latchkey children were also discussed. The next two chapters described benefits centered around independence and responsibility, help available to parents considering self-care, and several alternative programs. The final chapters focused on what the community can do to help the latchkey situation at local, state and national levels.

Long, Thomas J. Working Parents, Schools and Children in Self-Care. ERIC, ED 238552, 1983.

This article reviewed several topics dealing with children in self-care. Background data on the increase of working mothers and the percentage of single parents and double-income families were given. Attitudes of the children and parents who are dealing with the latchkey situation were discussed. The issue of latchkey children feeling pressure to grow up in a hurry was looked at carefully. The role that schools could play in providing care for children was discussed. Readjusting the school calendar to meet the needs of the working world was mentioned as the most promising long-term solution. This would include lengthening the school day and year or shortening parents' work year, week or day. Long also addressed how the federal government could help the problem.

Long, Thomas J., and Lynette Long. "Latchkey Children" Katz, Lilian G., Editor, Current Topics in Early Childhood Education. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1984.

This book contained several chapters dealing with current topics in education. Chapter Six was about latchkey children. Long and Long did a review of current research that pertained to the problem of latchkey children. Differences regarding the number of latchkey children were found in this review. Suggestions and intervention programs were mentioned as ways to assist and provide services to help latchkey children while they are alone. Survival skills training, telephone hotlines (such as "Phone Friend", which provides empathic listening, help in problem solving and referral for children), block mother programs, and senior citizens paired with juvenile volunteers to provide care for young children were all alternatives for the latchkey child. The authors concluded by stressing the following needs: For existing modes of child care to be made more accessible; for more age-appropriate programs to be developed; for school-based programs to be expanded in size and number; for employers to become more involved in providing child-care assistance; and for children to be better informed in skill areas necessary to maintain themselves when they are home alone.

Long, Thomas, and Lynette Long. The Handbook for Latchkey Children and Their Parents. New York: Berkley Books, 1984.

This book was written for parents who leave their children in self-care. This handbook addressed issues that latchkey children have to deal with while home alone. It covered safety procedures on what the child should do when confronted with such things as a nosebleed or broken bones. This book was a guide for parents and children to read through together so the parent would feel more at ease when leaving the child home alone. The authors stressed the importance of communication between parents and children. Parents who feel positive about the self-care experience will more likely have children who will also feel positive about the experience. Chapter 11 provided information on several current programs that work. Businesses and companies offer such programs as on-site child care which provides a child-care center on or near company premises. Family day care provides a more homelike environment with several locations available. Job sharing, flex-time, permanent part-time work, and flexible workplace (which allows you to do your current job at home through computer and telephone hook-up) are examples of employer-based efforts to support working parents. Community efforts in support of working parents were also described. School-based child care, hotlines, survival training programs, and safe home programs were all mentioned as preventative programs to help latchkey children.

McCurdy, Jack. "Schools Respond to Latchkey Children," The School Administrator 42 (1985): 16-18.

This article addressed the huge and growing number of unattended children in America. The article discussed whether or not these children are in jeopardy. The article focused on the role of the school in solving the latchkey problem. Demands by parents to provide child care programs have only partially been met by a variety of community, church, business and social-service agencies and organizations. Positive and negative aspects of school involvement were discussed. Schools can offer the facilities, the knowledge and the experience in working with children, parents and professionals. Programs at school would be very convenient for parents. Facilities would not be vacant for vandalism. Community support would increase. School districts with low enrollment could benefit from a program like this which would attract students and parents to the school. Obstacles and concerns include the lack of policies at federal and state levels, intrusion by government into family matters, higher taxes, increased responsibility for the schools and undetermined legal liabilities. Private industry was mentioned as a major untapped service of support for child care.

McKnight, Judy, and Betsy Shelsby. "Checking In: An Alternative for Latchkey Kids." Children Today 13 (1984): 23-25.

This article described an alternative program for latchkey children that was started during the 1983-84 school year in Fairfax, Virginia. A grant was received to design and test a check-in program for pre-adolescent children. The check-in programs are designed for older elementary and junior high school children who want more flexible care and supervision. Parents drew up contracts with their children to decide just how much freedom and responsibility their children could have. Parental permission could be given to the children to visit friends, spend time in their own home, play in the neighborhood, or attend school or community activities. Each child's plan for day care was different, depending on the needs, interests and routines decided earlier by the parents, child, and provider. Information was given at the end of the article on how to obtain materials on setting up more check-in programs in other communities.

Morlock, Linda L. Latchkey: A Model School-Age Child Care Program Operated in the Public Schools. ERIC, ED 259828, 1984.

This article gave a program overview of a latchkey program set up by a task force in Pinellas County, Florida, in 1986 for school-age children. Background information of the program was given, and the program goals and objectives were stated. The organizational structure of the center was charted. Discussion also included site development, interrelationship with the public school system, developmental components of the latchkey curriculum, and the cost effectiveness of the services provided. The schools provide the buildings at no cost, but compensation is given through a lease process for costs such as utilities. The latchkey programs provide developmental day care for infants, preschool children, and school-age children. The principal of the school acts in a coordinating role for the program, but has no direct responsibility. A schedule of the program's daily routine was provided.

Reynolds, Ruth C., and Earl J. Ogletree. Latchkey Programs: A Research Review. ERIC, ED 267900, 1985.

This article addressed the subject of latchkey children and then gave a problem statement and listed objectives of the study. The method of data collecting was a questionnaire mailed to all 50 states. Only 31 states responded, and only 14 had any type of latchkey program. The findings showed that most existing programs were private agencies, not state-implemented. Results of the study indicated that few latchkey programs are available. The author stated that latchkey programs must be expanded, and that support must come from all levels of the government. The author then gave a profile of latchkey children, latchkey parents, and programs available.

Robinson, Valeria M. "5,000,000 Latchkey Children." PTA Today 8 (1983): 13-15.

This article presented an example of a latchkey child and discussed how widespread the latchkey issue is becoming. Higher divorce rates, more women joining the work force, two-career families, smaller size and greater mobility of families are all said to contribute to the rise in latchkey children. Many schools have eliminated extracurricular activities after school because of budget cuts. Parents find day care expensive and transportation a problem. Feelings and fears that latchkey children experience were mentioned. The educator's role in helping latchkey children with their emotions and in teaching them survival skills was discussed. Solutions such as "neighborhood watch" or "block mother" programs were suggested. Partnership with agencies, like the YMCA, were also recommended as possible community resources to help provide care for children after school.

Seligson, Michele, and others. School-Age Child Care: A Policy Report. ERIC, ED 242433, August, 1984.

This report was designed for people involved in starting School-Age Child Care (SACC) programs. It focused on child care policy and various programs that provide a safe environment of care and learning for children. The report was divided into seven sections which covered what we know about SACC, research, history of SACC, role of public schools, financing, regulation and recommendations. Section Two on research primarily focused on measuring the effects of self-care on cognitive and social adjustment, children's fears, play, and risks. The author stated that more sophisticated research is needed to determine the full impact of self-care on children. Arguments for school involvement and problems that arise with schools becoming involved were discussed in Section Four.

Stroman, Suzanne Higgs, and Eleanor R. Duff. "The Latchkey Child: Whose Responsibility?" Childhood Education 59 (1982): 76-79.

The fact that latchkey children are not a new phenomenon was emphasized in this article. In 1943, the plight of "door key" children was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators. Unsupervised children became highly visible during the wartime effort. The magnitude of the latchkey problem was discussed. Figures from the U. S. Bureau of Census, the labor force, and employment status indicated a sharp rise in latchkey children since 1970. Impact on the children, and concern for children's safety and mental attitudes were discussed. The article called for greater community response at all levels in addressing the plight of latchkey children and their parents. Several types of child-care programs were mentioned, but the need for more program availability was suggested.

Strother, Deborah Burnett. "Latchkey Children: The Fastest-Growing Special Interest Group in the Schools." Phi Delta Kappan, December 1984, 290-293.

This article dealt with the important role the school must play in alleviating the latchkey problem. The author mentioned both positive and negative aspects that would be involved if school-based programs were incorporated into the public schools. Positive aspects included parental support, higher enrollment in public schools, utilization of empty classrooms, and a reduction in vandalism. The negative points were from the teachers and school administrators. Confusion about the limits of the schools' responsibility was a concern. Having to deal with legal and policy issues such as liability and licensing, heavier work loads, tax increases, and problems that arise when starting a new program were other concerns of the public school staff.

U.S. Congress, Hearing Before the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. Child Care: Exploring Private and Public Sector Approaches. ERIC, ED 271194, June, 1984.

This hearing before the select committee explored child care and the needs of children that were not being met in their current child care situation. Children and parents involved in child care or a latchkey situation appeared before the committee, as did others like doctors, lawyers, psychologists, and school and government officials. Testimonies focused on different child-care issues depending on who was giving the testimony. Topics such as experiences of latchkey children, child care for disabled children, difficulties in finding acceptable child care, child abuse in child care centers, and the costs of quality care were discussed during testimonies. Concerns on starting a child care center, costs involved, and business involvement were expressed.

SUMMARY

The number of latchkey children in America is rapidly rising. Each day at least six million young children throughout the nation return to an empty house after school (Rooney 1983:5).

Literature, studies, and research have shown that latchkey children may be affected emotionally, socially, and academically. Both positive and negative aspects can be involved in all these areas.

The emotional impact of the latchkey situation depends upon the age and maturity level of each child and other environmental conditions as well (Rooney 1983:19). Evidence showed that latchkey children experience high levels of fear. The most common fear was that someone would break into the house while they were alone. (Long and Long, Instructor:39, Rooney:20). The most common method used by latchkey children for coping with fear was hiding (Long and Long, Latchkey:13). Latchkey children under self-care face many risks: Negative feelings, insecurity, accidents, abuse, neglect, and fear (Reynolds, 1985:4).

Socialization of latchkey children was seriously limited by their experiences. Stunting of emotional and social growth due to a lack of contact with parents was found to be a consequence of the latchkey situation (Stewart, 1981:8).

Eighty percent of the children at home alone could not invite friends into their homes under any circumstances when an adult was not present (Long and Long, Latchkey:11). This led to boredom, loneliness, and isolation. Positive effects included fostering independence, resiliency, and trust in children, and providing a balance to our society's tendency to overprotect and coddle our offspring (Stewart, 1981:8).

Studies which were conducted on the cognitive development of latchkey children showed evidence that cognitive deficits existed among these children. In a study done by Woods, unsupervised girls exhibited deficits in school achievement and intelligence quotients. It was also found that unsupervised girls may have some difficulty in school relations (Woods, 1972:18). Long and Long noted greater concern about school assignments and homework for latchkey children than their peers because no one was home to help them (Long and Long, Instructor:39).

The literature indicated that several types of child care programs are available for latchkey children today. However, work demands, schedules, and economics lead many parents into self-care for their children (Reynolds, 1985:5). Increasing numbers of alternative programs are becoming visible for latchkey children in the United States so self-care is no longer the only option. School-Age Child Care (SACC) programs provide comprehensive supervised child

care that has a great effect on the total well-being of both parents and children. They also provide constructive alternatives for appropriate use of leisure time and creative activities. Development of the child's cognitive and social skills, as well as increased self-identity and self-worth are other benefits which SACC programs provide (Morlock, 1984:5). Businesses and companies have begun to offer programs such as on-site child care, job sharing, flex-time, permanent part-time work, and flexible workplace (Long and Long, Handbook 1984:199).

Alternative programs such as "checking in", or block parents, provide before- and after-school care which is flexible supervision for older elementary and junior high school children (McKnight, 1984:24).

Each family must find the type of child care that best meets its needs. Research has shown that each community must develop a program that responds to local problems and that is tailored to meet local needs (Reynolds, 1985:12).

CONCLUSION

Awareness of the issue of latchkey children is increasing every day. Children are being affected in ways that hinder them emotionally, socially, and academically. The latchkey issue is a social problem, and there are many risks for these children.

Fear was the largest problem that latchkey children faced. Isolation from friends and family was also a concern of children involved in self-care.

Businesses and companies are becoming aware of the plight of latchkey children. They are providing some programs to alleviate stress among their employees who have children in self-care.

Latchkey programs such as SACC, block parents and "checking in" are being expanded beyond businesses and companies. In order to make these programs effective, they need the support of public officials. Answers and help must come from all levels of government, not just from the local community level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Employers should become more involved in providing child-care assistance.

2. Children should be better informed in skill areas necessary to maintain themselves when they are home alone.

3. Development of workshop-inservice programs for parents, teachers, children or anyone that might be involved, to become aware of issues involving latchkey children.

4. Expansion of child care programs of all types to meet the needs of each family.

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